

High  
School  
SPECIALS



2018 High School Specials

**Impact Report**



In the summer of 2018, **1,758 high school students** went on an incredible journey with us. They took a courageous step out of their comfort zone and made a valuable impact on communities across the globe. This report highlights their achievements.

All our High School Special Projects encourage volunteers to learn deeply about different cultures, meet new people, and transform their own life and the lives of those around them. This year, our volunteers met some amazing people who taught and inspired them. In turn, they inspired others.

They've developed meaningful connections with people from all backgrounds and walks of life, and have come home with a richer knowledge of the world around them. At Projects Abroad, we value the diversity of our volunteers and interns. This diversity gives our High School Special volunteers the chance to connect with an international network of like-minded global citizens, and use their unique combination of skills and interests to make a difference as a team.

We're proud of what our High School Special volunteers and interns accomplished this year. I want to personally thank each of you for joining us on this journey, discovering what you're capable of, and being a part of our global impact!

**Greg Thomson**  
CEO at Projects Abroad





# 2018 High School Special highlights

THESE ARE JUST A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS  
OF OUR HIGH SCHOOL SPECIAL VOLUNTEERS THIS YEAR.  
IN 2018, THEY:



Worked with over  
**4,800 children**  
around the world



Screened over  
**7,650 people**  
during medical outreaches



Built  
**3 playgrounds**  
and 2 multi-sensory gardens



Painted  
**5 schools and  
21 classrooms**



Picked up over  
**1,300 kg  
of litter**



Planted over  
**5,800  
trees**



Collected eggs from over  
**180 turtle nests**  
to protect them from poachers



# Journey With Us Through Summer 2018

We'd like to use this report to lead you through our volunteers' departure and arrival in a foreign country, their valuable project work, and the impact this experience had on them once they arrived home. We want you to come with us as we explore what our volunteers achieved on every part of the journey, as they travelled abroad to discover what they're capable of.

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43 Volunteering on a High School Special in 2018 is only the beginning

## Contributing to a bigger picture

We set out long-term goals for our projects. We've developed these goals by collaborating with community members and hearing from them what the needs of the community are.

Our High School Special volunteers play an important role in bringing us closer to our long-term goals. All of their tasks are in line with these goals, ensuring they are building on the work of previous volunteers.

## INITIATIVES BASED ON THE UN'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Sustainable Development Goals are 17 long-term goals set out by the UN. They aim to encourage global transformation, creating a better world for people and wildlife. All of our projects focus on long-term goals inspired by one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this way, we ensure that our High School Special volunteers are contributing to global initiatives that have a lasting impact.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS





## Making the decision

Making the decision to step out of your comfort zone and volunteer abroad is scary. That's why our staff provide unparalleled support throughout this extraordinary adventure. Our Project Experts guide volunteers on the project that would be the best fit for them.

*"I joined the High School Special programme because I was looking to go abroad and do community service while also getting an opportunity to explore a new culture. I did not want to have to do that all on my own as that can be a very intimidating task to have, and the High School Special programme allowed me to help out in incredible communities, while also exploring different cultures."*

**Naomi R,**  
Childcare & Spanish in Argentina and  
Childcare & Community Village in Fiji

*"I chose to join a High School Special programme because it is a safe way to travel (which means my parents let me go). I also wanted to join a group so I could meet other teenagers from around the world with the same interests as me."*

**Oda W,**  
Childcare & Community Work in Ghana and  
Public Health in Cambodia

## Preparing for departure

Once this year's High School Special volunteers made the courageous decision to go abroad and make a difference, their personal Volunteer Advisor got in touch. Volunteer Advisors fully prepare volunteers for departure. They give guidance on the country and culture, what the project will entail, visa requirements, and all other relevant details. They're also there to answer all of our volunteers' questions.

Our in-house visa team can give additional visa advice, where necessary. And we even have a flights team, who can arrange convenient and affordable routes. All of this preparation takes the hassle out of travelling and helps ease the nerves of first-time travellers.

*"As a VA it is of paramount importance to build and maintain a good relationship with volunteers prior to departure. A lot of our volunteers sign up months in advance and I ensure that they are kept excited and well informed as they get closer to leaving."*

*I do this by informing them of everything related to their chosen destination, which includes things like: cultural norms, what to expect when they first arrive, how to acclimatise, giving them information on their role as a volunteer, providing them with project and accommodation information, answering visa questions and questions in general, and of course calming down both parents and volunteers alike about any concerns, especially those who are travelling on their own for the very first time."*

*As the main point of contact the volunteer has prior to departing, I prepare them as best as I can by giving them all relevant information and going the extra mile for those who are quite nervous or anxious about their first big trip abroad."*

*It is great getting to meet all of our volunteers be it via the phone, emails, or skype. Being a part of their journey excites me as it means being part of a community that aims to make a difference."*

**Claudia Arendse,**  
Volunteer Advisor for Belize, Nepal, Peru, and Thailand



*"From the moment I signed up to my departure, I was in constant contact with Projects Abroad staff, who patiently answered every possible question I could think of. I was also given login details for my own Projects Abroad page, which included details about the country I was visiting and what my project would entail. This made me feel a lot more comfortable before starting my journey. Before my flight, I was also put in contact with another volunteer who would be on my flight. This was very reassuring as this was my first time flying solo!"*

**Alice W,**  
Law & Human Rights  
in South Africa



## Arrival in destination

Our hassle-free approach means our volunteers arrived without the stress of arranging transport for themselves or finding their way around. Our staff met each volunteer at the airport and took them to their accommodation. They helped them settle in and gave them a thorough introduction to their host family, their team, and their project work.



### THIS YEAR:

**1,758**  
volunteers joined us  
on the trip of a lifetime

**404**  
volunteers booked flights  
through us  
which brought them safely to  
their destinations

Volunteers came from  
**69**  
different countries,  
including the UK, the US, China,  
Spain, France, South Korea,  
India, Japan, and Poland

Volunteers joined us in  
**27**  
project destinations,  
including Argentina, Nepal,  
Ghana, Cambodia, Peru, Sri  
Lanka, and Tanzania

*"It was my first time [travelling alone]. Since we had good people that took care of us, I always felt safe. I discovered that I am good at adapting to new cultures."*



**Camilla J,**  
Childcare & Community Work in Peru



*"Something that really stayed with me during my experiences with Projects Abroad has been how understanding the staff is. They all understand how scary it is to travel on your own, and they help to the best of their abilities to make each volunteer comfortable."*



**Naomi R,**  
Childcare & Spanish in Argentina and  
Childcare & Community Village in Fiji



# Meeting new people

One of the highlights of the arrival process for many of our High School Special volunteers is the friendly faces that greet them on the other side of a long flight. Our staff met this year’s volunteers at the airport and took them to their host families or hotel. They were greeted enthusiastically by their new family abroad. This became a home away from home for volunteers.



*“[What I enjoy most about hosting young volunteers is] meeting different individuals, learning about their culture, and making lifelong friends. Some still stay in touch and visit whenever they make their way to Cape Town on family trips.”*

**Tasneem B,**  
Host mother in South Africa

*“I love it when the volunteers gather during meal times. I love asking about their work and about their country.”*

**Tita D,**  
Host mother in the Philippines

*“Some of them come very shy or with a certain expectation, but when they are received with great affection, they react differently and get involved with the family and our activities.”*

**Host family**  
in Costa Rica

# Finding their feet

Many of our High School Special volunteers were shy at first. It’s completely natural to be nervous! But they quickly found their feet, with the help of our staff, their host family, and the group of students sharing this experience with them.



*“For me it was an amazing experience watching how the volunteers got from the point where they first met each other, learning things about the others and also about themselves, growing up to the point where they became an effective and good team.”*

**Andra Tanasescu,**  
High School Special Supervisor in Romania

*“It was an incredible experience supervising the groups, because you really get to see how they grow and come out of their shells and work with others from different countries and cultures.”*

**Nadia van der Schyff,**  
Volunteer Coordinator in South Africa

*“It was a wonderful experience; each volunteer was unique in their own way. They were all doubtful in themselves at first, but as the days progressed, they all became confident and hard-working. They all looked out for each other, nobody got left behind. They made me laugh every day, there was never a dull time around them. They have learned a lot from me as I have learned from them as well.”*

**Joshua Borland**  
Conservation Project Coordinator and Field Scientist in Belize





## Work in destination

After a detailed orientation at their placements, our High School Special volunteers were ready to begin their work. This is what they achieved:

### Working with people

#### Medicine & Healthcare

Our High School Special volunteers played an important role in supporting local medical staff. During medical outreaches, High School Special volunteers were closely supervised by medical professionals. They helped with the more basic tasks, like measuring blood sugar levels and blood pressure.

They first learnt these skills during organised workshops with medical professionals. Their work during outreaches meant they could help staff reach out to more people during medical outreaches in disadvantaged communities.

The communities volunteers worked with don't have the funds or transport to seek regular medical care. Without regular screening, many illnesses go undetected until symptoms become severe. Providing early detection is key to making sure community members can seek early treatment. In this way, these simple routine checks can make a difference in diagnosing diseases, identifying risks, and preventing further problems down the line.



*"The volunteers were very willing to learn, were very observant, respectful and used their initiative. Having them here during the summer, which is usually the busiest period of the year, reduced the staff workload as the volunteers were very helpful, engaging and willing to assist in any way they possibly could. Because of their enthusiasm, they were given tasks to do such as preparing cotton balls, weighing and checking patients' blood pressure, which allowed more staff to focus on other tasks"*

**Nurse Lawrence**  
from a health centre in Jamaica





SOME OF THE INITIATIVES MEDICAL VOLUNTEERS ASSISTED WITH INCLUDE:

Health checks  
for **1,130**  
children, elderly and  
disabled people in  
Cambodia

Health screening  
outreaches  
for **240**  
people in Mongolia,  
many of them  
homeless

**27**  
outreaches  
in Ghana,  
where they measured  
blood pressure and  
tested for hepatitis B  
for over 1,000 people,  
and conducted 159  
malaria tests

Outreaches  
for **2,700**  
people in Sri Lanka

Free  
health checks  
for **37**  
community members  
in Kenya

Outreaches  
for over  
**250**  
children in Peru

**10** medical  
outreaches in  
Tanzania, where they  
screened over 1,000  
community members

Diabetes  
screening  
for over  
**200**  
people in Bolivia

Cleaning  
**200**  
children's teeth  
to promote oral  
hygiene in Bolivia

**150** cat and  
dog vaccinations  
for community  
members in Bolivia  
who can't afford to  
vaccinate their pets

Outreaches  
in Belize for  
**550**  
community members

Volunteers screened over  
**7,650 people**  
during medical outreaches

Case study



THE POWER  
OF EARLY  
DETECTION

Under the supervision of a doctor, medical volunteers in Peru assisted with running blood tests for local children. In particular, they tested iron levels to check for anaemia. Doctors then used this information to advise parents on the next steps. One boy was found to have a particularly low iron level.

After receiving the results, the medical team spoke to his mother and referred him for follow-up treatment. He was eventually taken to meet with a specialist in Lima. Without the early detection by our volunteers, this boy would likely have experienced many health complications before seeking treatment.

Case study



STEVE'S NEW  
LEASE ON LIFE

Steve is a type II diabetic who first came to a mobile clinic in Belize with a severe foot infection. Volunteers tested his blood sugar and found that it was very high. Steve couldn't afford to test his sugar levels at home, so he hadn't realised that his health had been deteriorating. Medical professionals at the outreach referred him to a doctor, who made the connection that his foot infection was the result of his diabetes, and gave him a treatment plan.

Weeks later, Steve's foot was fully healed and he told us, "This is a testimony to the work that you guys are doing. I tell everyone this. If I didn't come here, I wouldn't have known how to treat my foot. These kids are doing great work."





It's not only outreaches where our medical volunteers made a valuable difference. During awareness campaigns, volunteers shared their knowledge of the causes, symptoms, and treatment of common illnesses. This information helps prevention and encourages early detection and treatment.

THESE ARE JUST A FEW EXAMPLES OF THE AWARENESS WORK OUR VOLUNTEERS DID THIS YEAR. THEY:

Taught **660** students in Jamaica and Nepal about **oral hygiene**

Distributed **dengue fever information** leaflets to **500** community members in Sri Lanka

Visited **126** houses in Jamaica and Sri Lanka to inspect for and **eradicate mosquito breeding grounds**

Distributed **sanitary products** at **2** schools in Kenya and spoke to the students about menstruation

Cleaned areas where stagnant water was collecting along **5** main roads in Sri Lanka to **get rid of potential mosquito breeding grounds**

Gave **first aid training** at schools in Nepal and Tanzania

Surveyed **72** households as part of the **Red Cross Zika Project** in Belize

Visited **99** houses in Belize, spoke to the residents, and handed out brochures to **raise awareness of mosquito-borne diseases**

Taught students in Jamaica, Argentina, and Tanzania about the importance of **healthy eating**

Ran **basic hygiene lessons** for **7** schools in Tanzania



A special thank you to:

**MIN SEO AND LAURA**, who always went the extra mile at their placement in Kenya. Along with bigger tasks, they helped with the more menial tasks of changing bed linen and feeding patients who couldn't feed themselves. They really helped improve the quality of care that patients received.





Case study



FUN IN THE SUN

July is UV safety month. To commemorate this, volunteers in Belize made their own sunscreen! But what's important about their recipe is that it doesn't include the harmful chemicals found in many commercial sunscreens. These chemicals contribute to coral bleaching, damaging the vital ecosystem of the Belize Barrier Reef. The sunscreen made by volunteers protects both the wearer's skin and the reef.

After making this sunscreen, volunteers held a presentation for local children about UV protection and coral bleaching. They even included games and a wordsearch to make the presentation extra memorable. Thank you to these volunteers for giving children in Belize the chance to have fun in the sun without damaging their skin or the reef.

Did you know?



Mosquitoes are the deadliest animals to humans on the planet! In 2018, we ran a global mosquito-borne diseases campaign to tackle this issue. High School Special volunteers around the world helped raise awareness about mosquito-borne diseases and destroy mosquito breeding grounds. They also distributed larvicide to community members who can't afford it and tested people for malaria and dengue fever during medical outreaches.



In the process of making an impact, medical volunteers had the added bonus of gaining valuable experience. These projects gave them the chance to see if they're really suited to and interested in a career in medicine or healthcare.

All of this work was done under close supervision by professionals. Our volunteers had plenty of help and guidance throughout this learning experience.

IN 2018, OUR HIGH SCHOOL SPECIAL MEDICINE VOLUNTEERS:

**Attended medical workshops** covering topics like basic check-ups, first aid, CPR, preparing injections and drips, suturing, and how to install a nasogastric tube and catheter

**Observed surgeries** such as abdominal surgeries, ENT surgeries, dental surgery, and open-heart surgery

**Observed C-sections and natural births** in Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania

**Shadowed medical professionals** during ambulance night shifts in Mongolia

**Assisted with eye tests and used the x-ray machine** at a hospital in Argentina, under the guidance of medical professionals

**Gained practical experience taking measures** like blood pressure and blood sugar, and dressing wounds during medical outreaches, with plenty of guidance from professionals

**Observed blood test analysis** in a lab in Tanzania

*"Honestly, I always said blood or raw wounds didn't bother me but at the same time I didn't really know if it did or didn't bother me. In the clinics that we were put in, I was exposed to flesh wounds and blood and I really got to know myself and I discovered I could handle blood."*

*"I learned so many things within the clinic and during our workshop lessons. Things like how to stitch, what type of stitches to use, and how to give injections, which we did on a piece of fruit and a pig leg."*

Faith L,  
Medicine in Peru

*"Some days, we helped teach children how to wash their hands and brush their teeth properly. Another time, we created our own recipes that were healthy, cheap, and easy to make and taught some of the moms in the Barangay how to make them."*

*"One of my favourite memories was when we held a fitness day activity at the health centre for some of the physiotherapy patients. The patients, nurses, and interns joined us. We taught them simple ways to make their daily chores into a workout. We helped them in strength and resistance training. At the end, we taught them a fun dance as a cardio workout."*

Sarah P,  
Public Health in the Philippines







## Human Rights

Around the world, High School Special volunteers campaigned for human rights and social justice.

In **Argentina**, volunteers joined thousands of women's rights activists in marches for abortion rights. This was in the lead up to a senate vote on the bill that would legalise abortion in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy. Human rights activists argue that bans on abortions cause women to seek unsafe terminations, which is a major cause of maternal mortality. According to Amnesty International, more than 3,000 women are reported to have died in the last 25 years in Argentina as a result of unsafe abortion.

In **Ghana**, volunteers ran an educational presentation for 80 students from 4 schools. The presentation focused on domestic violence, bullying, and basic human rights. After the presentation, volunteers held a quiz. They were impressed with how much the students had learnt and remembered.

In **South Africa**, volunteers commemorated national Women's Day by hosting an event for 400 women from a local township. Volunteers helped set up for the event and served the women as they relaxed and enjoyed a meal, talks, and entertainment.



*"From the education from the volunteers, I now understand what domestic violence is all about. I see it in my community every day, but did not know how to handle it."*

**A student**  
from one of the schools in Ghana



At the same time, Law and Human Rights volunteers had the opportunity to learn more about this field. This helps budding lawyers and human rights professionals prepare for their future career.



## THIS YEAR, LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS VOLUNTEERS:

Learnt more about the dictatorship and the **Dirty War** in Argentina by visiting ex-detention centres and meeting with one of our host fathers whose sister disappeared during this dark period in history

Practised their **public speaking skills** during moot courts in South Africa

Gained **valuable insight** into the legal system and human rights issues in a foreign country

Met with **lawyers and human rights professionals** during workshops to learn more about their work





Childcare

Early childhood sets the foundation for a child’s development into adulthood. It is in these formative years that children need the most support. Our High School Special volunteers worked with children around the world to encourage learning through play, and teach basic maths and English.

Our volunteers provide invaluable support to teachers in understaffed schools and day care centres. Without volunteer support, teachers aren’t able to closely monitor children and identify the areas they struggle with.

Volunteers also assisted at summer camps run during the school holidays. These camps help keep children stimulated so they can continue learning when they’re not at school. They also make it easier for working parents, who don’t have to take time off work to care for their children during working hours.



*“One instance that stood out to me happened on the way to the placement one day. I noticed one volunteer became more caring after joining our project as he helped look after senior people at the placement. This, according to other volunteers, inspired them the most during their project.*

*“The volunteer in question, Jason, helped a disabled man cross the road when other pedestrians were not willing to as the man smelled. Upon seeing this gesture, other volunteers shed tears and helped Jason out.”*

Tifa Wang,  
Country Director in China



*“This was a great life lesson for me: through our work, we can build connections which cross oceans. Our work is important, and we have the unique opportunity of helping connect dedicated volunteers to local communities or areas in need of a helping hand.”*

Nadia Moore,  
High School Special Coordinator  
in South Africa



THESE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF THEIR WORK:

This year’s volunteers  
**ran holiday schools** for  
**150**  
students in Ghana and  
**40**  
students in Argentina

Volunteers in  
Peru worked with  
**590**  
students at  
**understaffed day  
care centres**

Volunteers taught  
young students in  
Romania to **count  
to 10, and name  
animals, jobs,  
and feelings in  
English**

**30**  
kindergarten students  
in Fiji  
**learnt the  
months  
of the year in  
English**

A young South  
African girl  
**learnt to write  
her name** after  
months of struggling

Volunteers ran a  
**football club**  
in Ghana for  
**160** children

After 2 weeks  
volunteering at  
a kindergarten in  
Vietnam, volunteers  
**helped 95  
children count  
to 10 in English  
and recognise  
numbers**

Volunteers worked with over  
**4,800 children**  
around the world

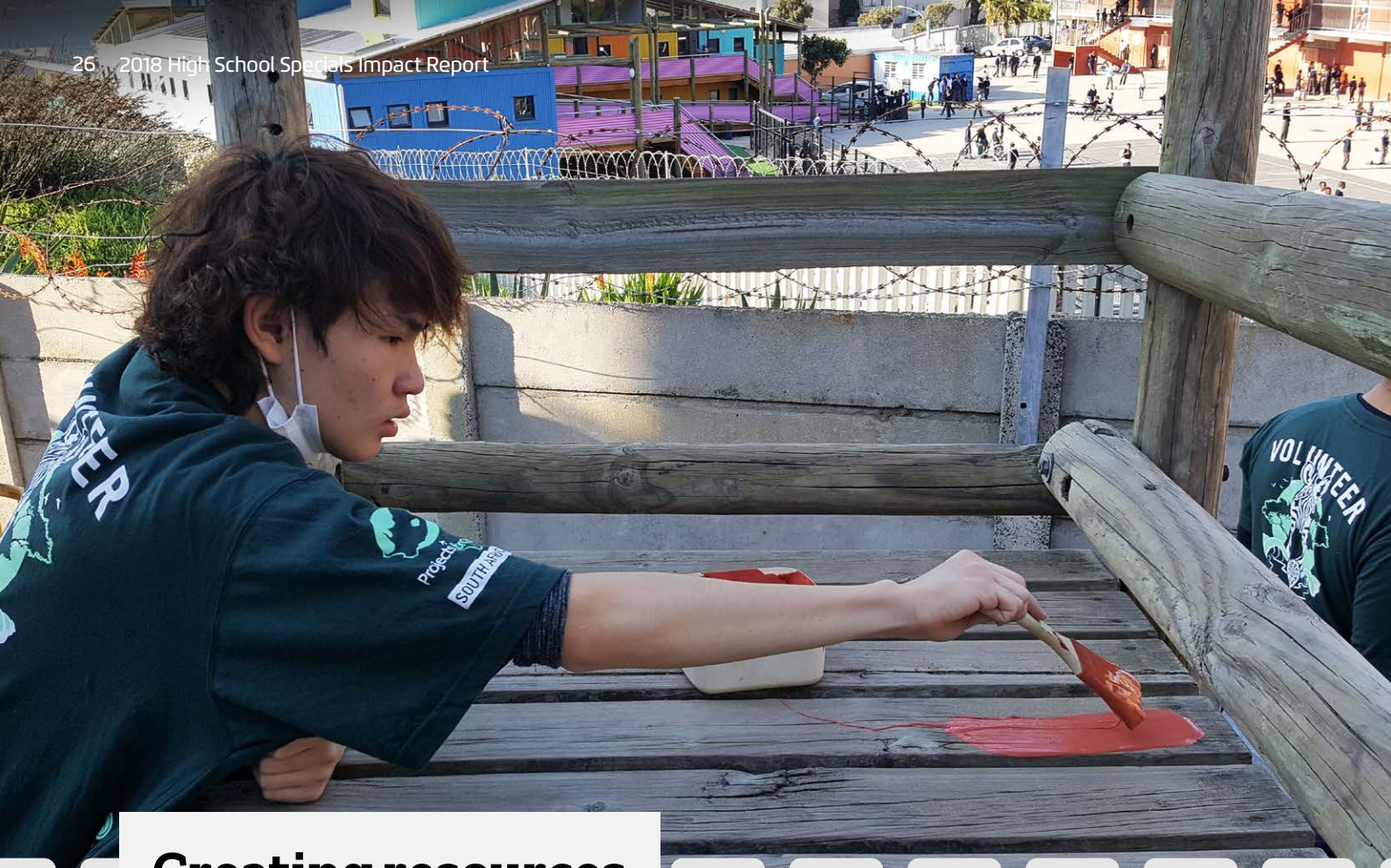
A special thank you to:

**CHILDCARE & COMMUNITY WORK VOLUNTEERS IN VIETNAM** who chose to cancel a social event to spend the evening buying school supplies for the students they’d been working with.

**PAULINE** who volunteered in Kenya. When she found out that Joseph, one of the children she’d been working with, was ill and had been admitted to hospital, she visited him with her group. She met Joseph’s mother and continued checking in on Joseph’s well-being until he was better and had been discharged from hospital.







## Creating resources

With plenty of youthful energy, our High School Special volunteers worked hard to create lasting resources for placements around the world. They worked together as a team to achieve tangible results. Using their own hands, they built things like playgrounds and classrooms from the ground up.

### IN TOTAL, OUR 2018 HIGH SCHOOL SPECIAL VOLUNTEERS BUILT:

**3 playgrounds**  
in Ecuador and Fiji

**2 hand washing systems**  
for kindergartens in Cambodia

**Roads to help students access**

**2 schools**  
in Cambodia

**Furniture for day care centres**  
in Peru

**2 multi-sensory gardens** using fruit trees and recycled materials in Mongolia and Sri Lanka

**Classrooms** for a school in Nepal



Bright colours help make spaces more attractive and educational murals help stimulate students. For younger children, exposure to different colours and shapes promotes sensory development. The painting our volunteers did played a big role in creating happy learning environments and comfortable living spaces.

### Case study



#### WHAT'S THE BUZZ IN KENYA

This year, our high school volunteers worked on a bee hive initiative in Kenya. They repaired and installed two beehives for a local bee farmer. This helps create a sustainable way for the farmer to support himself and his family. But that's not all! A portion of the profits from selling the honey will go towards maintaining a disadvantaged day care centre in the area. Thank you for your un-bee-lievable work, volunteers!

*"The church was last painted 15 years ago and we didn't have enough funds to paint it again. I'm really grateful to Projects Abroad for stepping in and helping us."*

Church Pastor  
in Fiji



Over **2,650 students**  
benefited from the painting  
volunteers did in schools and kindergartens

### THIS YEAR, VOLUNTEERS PAINTED:

**21 classrooms**  
in Jamaica and Cambodia

**5 schools**, including walls, door and window frames, floors, cupboards, and tables

**Half of the homes** in a Madagascan village

And **plastered incomplete mud houses** in a community during the rainy season in Ghana

**Educational murals** at **2 preschools** in Sri Lanka

**4 bathrooms** and a **therapy room** in Cambodia

**2 churches**, a **kindergarten**, and a **library** in Fiji

A **literacy room** in Belize



**VOLUNTEERS  
REPAIRED:**

**2 playgrounds**  
in Cambodia and South  
Africa to make them safe  
for children

**Classroom benches  
and roads** in  
Madagascar

**The garden area**  
of a women's shelter in  
South Africa

**A school garden**  
in Jamaica



*"The playground looks incredible and the kids will be so excited and proud of what we have now."*

**Teacher**  
from a day care centre in South Africa

*"We are grateful to Projects Abroad for their support. You have made my house very beautiful and now I can sleep with my family in peace without having to worry about rain washing down my house anymore."*

**Daavi A,**  
community member in Ghana whose house  
was plastered and painted by volunteers



**Case study**



**SO MUCH MORE  
THAN JUST  
RENOVATION WORK**

High School Special volunteers in Kenya renovated two schools in slum areas. Since primary education became free in Kenya in 2001, a lack of funding has left many public schools neglected and with unsafe infrastructure. For example, the classrooms of these particular schools had large holes in the floor and were extremely dirty. Lack of hygiene made it much easier for infectious diseases to spread throughout the school and the structural issues were not conducive to a stimulating learning environment.

Volunteers got stuck in cleaning, filling in holes, and painting the schools. After the renovation work was complete, a student at one of these schools gave a thank you speech on behalf of the school. During the speech, she broke down into tears as she spoke about how the class used to learn in an unsafe classroom. The headmaster also held a small ceremony to thank the volunteers and set aside a section of the school for volunteers to plant trees in memory of their valuable contribution.

Before



After

*"I always enjoy working with the High School Special volunteer groups. This was my 12th year working directly with High School Special volunteers. I enjoy seeing the volunteers taking on board what has been discussed during site briefings, workshops, and presentations. The volunteers' curiosity is always a joy to see and it is always a source of satisfaction to motivate and educate the High School Special groups, as well as be a part of their Peruvian archaeological experience."*

*"This year, we received a highly educated group of young people with a great sense of humour and thirst for knowledge. They were a very refreshing group of volunteers."*

**Daniel O'Shea**  
Archaeology Project Supervisor in Peru

Archaeology volunteers played an important role in preserving artefacts and protecting cultural heritage. They maintained dig sites, uncovered artefacts, and helped with cleaning, sorting and cataloguing their finds. These volunteers also had the opportunity to learn more about ancient civilisations.

**THIS YEAR, OUR HIGH SCHOOL SPECIAL  
ARCHAEOLOGY VOLUNTEERS:**

**Discovered** a clay statuette, several flint tools, and a painted lid with a handle from the Foeni culture, which is a rare artefact in this settlement in Romania

**Surpassed the project  
target of clearing 100 m<sup>2</sup>  
of terrace walls** of lichen at  
the main entrance of Pikillaqta  
archaeological park in Peru by  
more than 50%





## Protecting the planet

### Clean-ups

Our High School Special volunteers have set a great example of what it means to preserve our beautiful planet. Through clean-ups, biodiversity studies, awareness campaigns, reforestation initiatives, and invasive species removal, they've taken practical steps to conserve some of the most vulnerable ecosystems in the world.



In total, volunteers picked up over **1,300 kg** of litter in Belize, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Kenya, Mexico, and Sri Lanka



### Case study

#### CAN YOU DIG IT?

For a long time, the east side of Hunting Caye in Belize has been covered in litter. Our staff and volunteers would often notice sea turtles coming here to lay their eggs. They would dig around in the garbage looking for a suitable place to nest, only to give up and leave because there was too much litter for them to dig properly.

Volunteers noticed that a larger portion of this rubbish was below the surface of the sand. So our High School Special volunteers organised a clean-up in this area. They dug up 45 kg of rubbish that was buried in the sand.

The following night, they watched as a hawksbill turtle made her way onto the beach. She dug around until she found the perfect spot and laid her eggs where the volunteers had just cleaned. Thank you to our volunteers for your egg-celent work making this beach a suitable turtle nesting ground once more!

### Case study

#### SETTING AN EXAMPLE

This year's volunteers ran community days at 3 schools in a remote community outside of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. They gave talks on the harmfulness of plastic, waste management, and the importance of protecting the environment. They also played educational games relating to these topics and, with the help of the students, picked up over 180 kg of rubbish around the school grounds.

The following week, students from one of the primary schools asked for more rubbish bags and gloves to continue picking up litter. After they received these, teachers saw the students picking up litter around the school of their own accord. This heartening story shows the example volunteers set for local people to continue working towards a cleaner environment.





## Biodiversity studies

Monitoring wildlife and plants through biodiversity studies is an important part of creating effective conservation strategies. Volunteers conducted research, which is collated in databases and used to develop management plans. It is only by understanding species' behaviour, distribution, and habitat that we can effectively conserve them.

### Did you know?



Birds are good indicators of the health of an ecosystem. They also play a vital role in dispersing seeds so that plants can germinate. As with any single species, if birds were removed from an ecosystem, the results would be devastating for all creatures and vegetation in the food chain. That's why bird monitoring can tell us a lot about the health of the surrounding environment.



*"By participating in the Conservation programme, I learned a lot about Madagascar's unique flora and fauna and gained a better understanding of the ecosystem's fragile state."*

Simone V,  
Conservation & Community Work in Madagascar



## VOLUNTEERS PARTICIPATED IN:

**11 bird surveys** and **10 endangered Rothschild's giraffe surveys** in Kenya

**Turtle surveys** and the **tagging of 5 sea turtles** in Belize

**Monitoring giant tortoises** at a breeding centre in the Galapagos

**Lion monitoring** in Kenya

**Bird and monkey surveys** along a 3 km long trail in Costa Rica

**Butterfly and bat monitoring** in Costa Rica

**Bird monitoring** in Mexico and the Galapagos

## Reforestation initiatives

Our High School Special volunteers also did valuable reforestation work. By planting indigenous trees and mangroves, they helped preserve habitats for wildlife. Reforestation work also helps combat climate change, with trees, and particularly mangroves, absorbing huge amounts of carbon dioxide.



## THIS YEAR, VOLUNTEERS PLANTED:

Over **2,700** mangroves in Fiji

**650** mangrove seedlings in Mexico

Over **1,200** indigenous trees in Madagascar, Kenya, and Costa Rica

Volunteers also added **1,240** new propagules to the mangrove nursery in Fiji and built a new mangrove nursery in Mexico.

In total, volunteers planted over **5,800** trees





# Animal protection

Poaching is a huge threat to endangered species. Some examples of how our 2018 High School Special volunteers combated poaching are:

They collected eggs from **155 turtle nests**, which were relocated to protected nests at the wildlife centre where we work in Mexico. These relocations contributed to the total of **24,400 hatchlings released** by volunteers from June to August in Mexico.

In July and August, our High School Special volunteers in Peru played a role in relocating the eggs of **48 turtle nests**. From these nests, volunteers collected over **1,340 eggs**. The hatchlings were released on Taricaya Ecological Reserve’s 17th anniversary, which was 5 November 2018.

They **removed 17 wire snares** from a wildlife reserve in Kenya. Snares are a deadly threat to animals like buck, giraffes, and zebras. This means volunteers potentially saved 17 animals.



**Did you know?**

Leatherback turtles are critically endangered in the Pacific. That’s one step away from being extinct in the wild in this region! That’s why our volunteers work to protect this species along the coast of Mexico. One of the biggest threats to sea turtles is poachers, who collect eggs and sell them. Our volunteers go on night patrols to find newly laid nests. They collect the eggs before poachers can get to them and relocate them to protected corrals. Once the eggs hatch, volunteers release the hatchlings into the ocean.

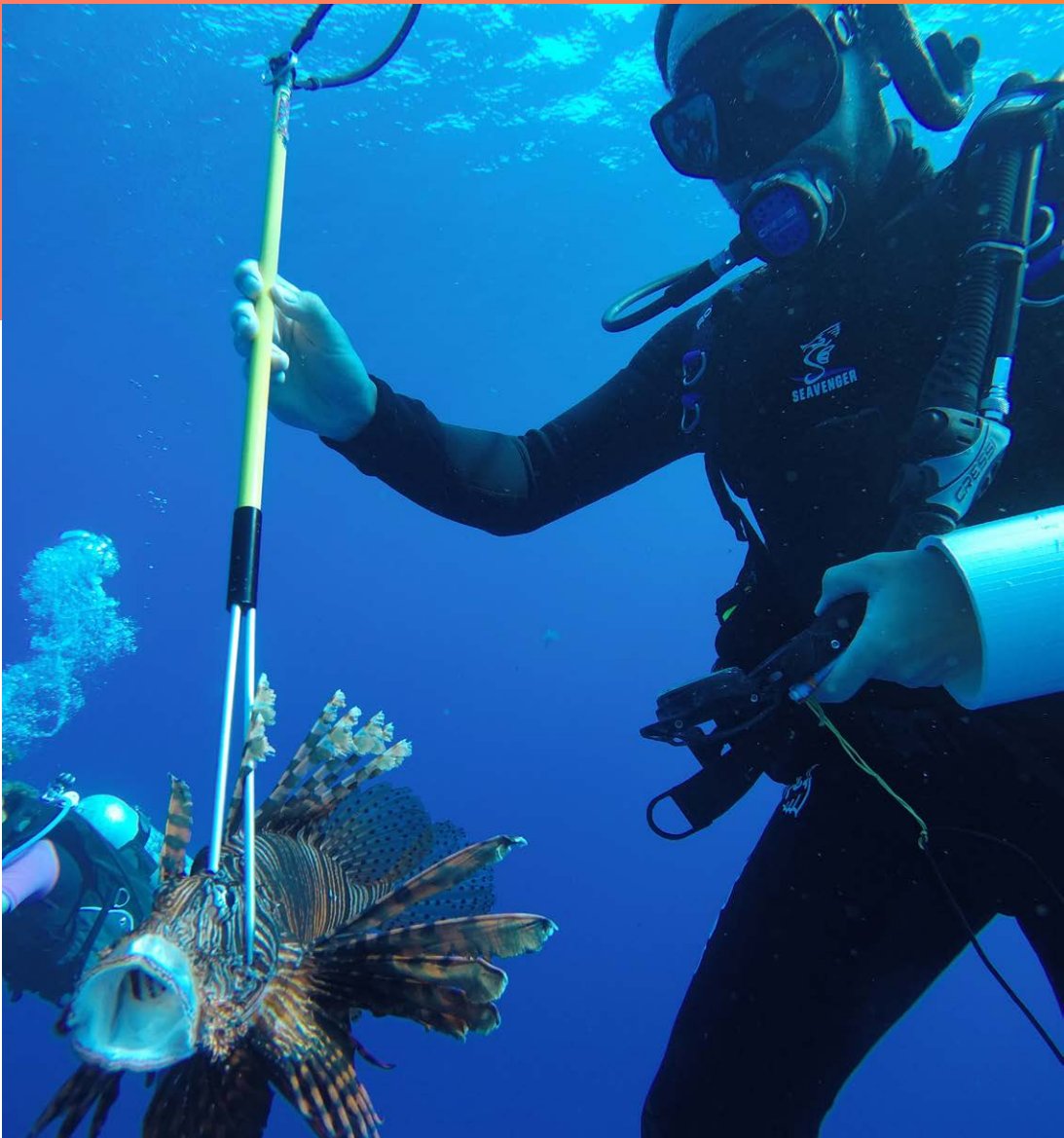
# Invasive species removal

Alien plants and animals are a threat to indigenous species. Our volunteers work to correct the imbalance these species cause in the countries where we work. As part of this work, this year’s High School Special volunteers:

**Removed 131 invasive lionfish** off the coast of Belize

**Helped destroy 30 invasive prickly pear plants** in Kenya by encouraging cochineal insects to feed on these plants

**Removed alien plant species**, particularly the raspberry plant, that affect populations of indigenous species in the Galapagos





## Community work

Conservation work isn't only about working directly with plants and animals. Our High School Special volunteers also did community work and awareness campaigns to encourage local people to lead more eco-friendly lives. In this way, they help community members develop a greater respect for the environment. This is one small step towards our long-term goal to equip local people with the knowledge and skills to continue the conservation work started by our volunteers.



*"One part of the programme that stood out for me was the path maintenance work. Initially, I was a bit apprehensive about this activity. However, working together with the other volunteers and local people made the work a lot of fun and, in the end, the trail that we repaired made all of the heavy lifting worthwhile. It was also rewarding knowing that we made a direct and positive impact on the villagers and within the park."*

**Simone V,**  
Conservation & Community Work in Madagascar



## SOME EXAMPLES OF THE WORK THEY DID IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES ARE:

Volunteers installed **6 energy-saving stoves** in Kenya. These stoves use 25% less firewood, meaning fewer trees will be cut down. They focused on building stoves for older community members to reduce the amount of labour-intensive firewood collection for them. The new stoves also help to reduce respiratory problems.

They **cleared a 2 km trail** in Barra Honda National Park in Costa Rica, to encourage tourists to stay on the path. This way, tourists won't walk through vegetation and disrupt animals' habitats.

Volunteers in Cambodia **ran workshops on waste management and conservation** in 3 local schools.

In Belize, volunteers **spoke to children about topics like recycling, sea turtles, and invasive lionfish** during a summer camp.



# Departure

Once the project work had come to an end and all the goals they'd set out had been met, it was time for this year's High School Special volunteers to say goodbye. Although the trip was over, this was really the beginning of a whole new way of looking at the world.

*"The whole experience was humbling and I think it was amazing to see young people leave the comfort of their homes to come to my country to help, learn, and experience a different culture from what they are used to. Most of the High School Special volunteers who come to Kenya, even though for a very short time, seem to go back home with a different mentality, and I have heard most of them say, just before they leave, that they now appreciate more what they have back home."*

**Scott Taari,**  
High School Special Coordinator in Kenya

*"It's so rewarding to see young people mature in so short a time, and gain new insights. It's also great to see how passionate the young volunteers are and how they constantly try to help, and do the best they can. I hope they continue to positively influence those around them back home, and use the life-skills they've learnt in South Africa to change their own communities for the better."*

**Nadia Moore,**  
High School Special Coordinator in South Africa







## Connecting with people

For our volunteers, meeting new people is one of the most rewarding aspects of these projects. They connect with our local staff, their host families, people in communities where they work, and of course, each other. Bonding over a shared love of helping others and making a difference means they establish deep, lasting relationships.



*"The memories and friends I made are ones that will last a lifetime. I think one of the best parts of the programme that most volunteers would agree with is that the people you meet with and the Projects Abroad family truly feel like a family."*

**Sarah P,**  
Public Health in the Philippines

*"Wow! Relationships were such a big and crucial part of this trip and experience. I got to meet and connect with so many amazing people on this trip, including the volunteers, supervisors, my host family, and the people and patients in Cusco."*

*"Beginning with my host family, I was truly blessed with staying with such a loving and amazing host family who always took care of me and looked after us. It was so hard saying goodbye to them, but I know they will always be my family and in my heart. Also with the volunteers, we all connected instantly and still remain great friends. Even after the trip, we all keep in touch. Overall, it was so hard saying goodbye to everyone, including the people of Cusco who were so welcoming and loving."*

**Faith L,**  
Medicine in Peru



## Learning about different cultures

Our High School Special Projects are the perfect opportunity for cultural exchange. Volunteers work closely with local people in developing countries, learning from them and discovering a different way of life. In the process, they connect with a group of like-minded volunteers from countries spanning across the globe.

*"The most significant effect of taking part in this programme was that it opened my eyes to the world we live in. I felt like before the trip, I was in my little "bubble" in Canada and when I came home, I realised how different every country is. This affected me and I became much more considerate, generous, and appreciative."*

**Jordan B,**  
Medicine in Nepal

*"In Argentina I tried something called milanesa, which is a type of meat. I used to be a semi picky eater and milanesa helped open me up to many different foods which I loved."*

**Naomi R,**  
Childcare & Spanish in Argentina and Childcare & Community Village in Fiji

*"In addition to experiencing social life in a new culture, they also experience what it is like working in a new culture. They get a chance to experience how Jamaicans operate in their various organisations. For example, they get to see what the school system and the healthcare system is like in another country. They learn about food and cooking, which is very big in my home. Many come with no knowledge of how to prepare their own meals, but then they learn a local dish and even try to replicate it at home. One volunteer contacted me to ask for recipes that we had done."*

**Dorette N,**  
Host mother in Jamaica







## Personal growth

When volunteers leave their project, they often remark that they feel like a new person. They go home with a renewed sense of responsibility. They grow in kindness and compassion, and they often want to keep making a difference even after they've arrived back home.



*"[If a friend were to ask why they should also join a High School Special programme] I would say in a heartbeat they should go. Honestly, this trip was the greatest experience ever and a big part of life. It taught me so many things about myself, my future, the things I love, and put a lot of things into perspective for me. Hands on my heart, I would go on another trip with this programme!"*

**Faith L,**  
Medicine in Peru

*"I'm more optimistic and positive as a person. I found helping people makes you happy too."*

**Jingshen "Jason" C,**  
Childcare & Pandas in China

*"I am still in contact with all past High School Special volunteers. For the past few years, I've seen how most of them progressed. Some are in their final year in Law, some are still in school, some have migrated to different countries. Some have come back to visit. Some I only met in the past three months and can't wait to see the attributes they've learnt here in South Africa come into play."*

**Ricardo Van Der Merwe,**  
Human Rights High School Special Coordinator in South Africa





## Volunteering on a High School Special is only the beginning

Our volunteers are safely back home. They've made connections with people around the world, transformed and grown through travel, realised their potential, and made a meaningful impact. So, what's next?

First of all, we want to thank every one of our 2018 High School Special volunteers. Without you, none of the amazing achievements in this report would have been possible.

We also want to remind you that volunteering doesn't have to stop once you get home. We are always ready to offer the next challenge, tailor-made to every stage of life. We'll continue to nurture you and guide you through trips, as a high school student, a university student, a career breaker, and beyond.

**So now that you've discovered what you're capable of, why not start planning your next trip with us?**



*Discover what you're  
capable of.*



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